

## Against the Grain

---

Volume 27 | Issue 1

Article 32

---

2015

# And They Were There: Reports of Meetings

Sever Bordeianu

*University of New Mexico, Albuquerque*, [sbordeia@unm.edu](mailto:sbordeia@unm.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bordeianu, Sever (2015) "And They Were There: Reports of Meetings," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 27: Iss. 1, Article 32.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7014>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

# And They Were There

## Reports of Meetings — HELIN 2015 and the 34th Annual Charleston Conference

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (Head, Print Resources Section, University Libraries, MSC05 3020, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001; Phone: 505-277-2645; Fax: 505-277-9813) <[sbordeia@unm.edu](mailto:sbordeia@unm.edu)>

**HELIN Consortium Conference** — George E. Bello Center for Information and Technology, **Bryant University** — Smithfield, Rhode Island — January 14, 2015

Reported by: **John Riley** (*Against the Grain* Contributor)  
<[jdriley@comcast.net](mailto:jdriley@comcast.net)>

Every year the **HELIN Consortium** holds its annual conference at **Bryant University's** George E. Bello Center for Information and Technology. Nearly 200 participants are treated to some of the best talks by leading writers and thinkers in the academic library world. As icing on the cake, they are serenaded by a wonderful string trio during lunch.

**Matthew Battles**, from **Harvard's** Berkman Center and its metaLAB, led off the day with an overview on how libraries are evolving, entitled "*Libraries Beyond the Book: Residual, Dominant, Emergent.*" **Battles** explained that he was employing a concept originally formulated by **Raymond Williams** to describe "a constant negotiation between the dominant, emergent, and residual cultures mediated by the processes of selective tradition and incorporation." Which, as applied to libraries, explains how current practices incorporate both historic forms as well as the pull of the future, employing both to keep culture alive and growing.

However academic the concept may ring, it is a very dynamic way of approaching librarianship. It allows for simultaneous experimentation and curation of historic resources. **Battles** gave a concrete example of this when he described the "Curarium."

Find at: [curarium.com](http://curarium.com) part of metaLAB <http://metablab.harvard.edu/about/>.

The **Harvard** Renaissance Library at I Tatti, in Florence, and the Graduate School of Design have cooperated to digitize a collection of seventeen thousand photographs of "Homeless Paintings" documented by **Bernard Berenson** nearly one hundred years ago. What they have been able to do is to create a resource to help track down some of these lost or stolen works of art by leveraging their digital collection with crowd-sourced assistance. Another concept informing the Curarium's mission is derived from the thought of **Aby Warburg** and **Andre Malraux**, who sought to create links between all times and cultures: a comparative technique.

**Battles** also described a video documentation of the **Harvard** Depository that students from the Graduate School of Design have made. They tried to understand the technology and seemingly alien atmosphere that envelopes the structure and how it fits into the culture of the book at the library. They were intrigued with the notion that the books in the archive are estimated to last for five hundred years, while the structure itself is only built to last for seventy five years. The result of their study is entitled "Cold Storage" and will be shown for the first time this February. <http://metablab.harvard.edu/2014/05/cold-storage-teaser-trailer/>

The film is a direct response to French film director **Alain Resnais'** "Toute la Memoire du Monde" about the **Bibliothèque Nationale** made in 1956. In Resnais' film the library is seen as a kind of cathedral of knowledge. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0RVSZ\\_yDJs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0RVSZ_yDJs)

**Andrew Lippman**, pioneer at **MIT's** Media Lab and now head of its Viral Communications research group, spoke next. He had some great tales from the early days of the Media Lab where he worked on projects

such as touch screens, real world mapping (i.e., Google Street View), and even word processors where he had to instruct engineers what kerning was before they could proceed with designing their software. Some of the changes in computer culture have been equally disruptive. He mentioned that at one time a keyboard would never have been found in a living room or even in an executive's office, where a secretary would have taken dictation. Now we have keyboards and computers in our living rooms which have become locations for exploration with the rise of streaming technology and interactive televisions linked to the Internet.

He likened "old" television, where programs are exclusively owned by individual networks and their shows are strictly scheduled, to university education where enrollment is exclusive and courses are strictly scheduled. He wondered if higher education will endure the same fate as television where a majority of viewers have already cut the cable.

His points were a good lead in for the next speaker, **Jeffrey Young**, an editor and writer at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, who took us on a worldwide tour of the MOOC phenomenon with a talk entitled "Beyond the MOOC Hype." (Which is also the title of his eBook.) He admitted that the feverish coverage of MOOCs at his journal has waned from two years ago, but pointed out the MOOC instructional model's continued growth and popularity.

He traced the origins of MOOCs to the growth of interest in Artificial Intelligence, especially in Silicon Valley. Many venture capitalists considered MOOCs the "killer app" for AI. For profit companies such as EdEx and Coursera grew out of this conjunction. Textbook companies grew interested as well. The speaker noted that textbook companies don't even want to be in the textbook business where they have to deal with thousands of individual professors instead of selling to a wider, more open market.

He also noted that many organizations other than universities are producing MOOCs, entities such as the **Smithsonian Institution**, the **World Economic Forum**, and **Linux**. He even noted that individuals are creating MOOCs as profit-making ventures. They often use the Udemy site to create them. LinkedIn is even listing MOOCs on members' profiles as part of their curriculum vitae. It remains to be seen how much weight they carry in academic career advancement.

The speaker closed by noting some of the ancillary effects of MOOCs by mentioning questions they have helped raise, such as why should college cost so much, why should it last four years with two semesters per year, and finally, are lectures the best way to teach? The speaker theorized that MOOCs are a backlash against the professionalism of college education and that they were opening up learning as well as teaching to a wider world. He believes that MOOCs have helped stimulate colleges to improve their classroom teaching and that MOOCs have led to a new culture of research in teaching.

The **HELIN Consortium** consists of 11 academic and 11 special libraries in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. This year **Robert H. Aspri**, executive director of **HELIN**, **Martha Rice Sanders**, Knowledge Management Librarian, **Ruth E. Souto**, Systems Librarian, and **Ruth Sullivan**, Chair **HELIN** Board of Directors, put together a particularly informative and lively set of speakers. They were: **Matthew Battles** (<https://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/mbattles/>), **Andrew Lippman** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew\\_B.\\_Lippman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_B._Lippman)), and **Jeffery Young** ([http://www.jeffyoung.net/?page\\_id=18](http://www.jeffyoung.net/?page_id=18)). 🌳

**Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition, "The Importance of Being Earnest" — Francis Marion Hotel, Embassy Suites Historic Downtown, Courtyard Marriott Historic District, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, and School of Science and Mathematics Building, Charleston, SC — November 5-8, 2014**

Charleston Conference Reports compiled by: **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <[r-kubilius@northwestern.edu](mailto:r-kubilius@northwestern.edu)>

continued on page 76